ONE TRENCH OR TWO?

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Foreword

The question of the National Progressive Front has been a pivotal one in the Iraqi revolutionary experience since July 17-30, 1968. The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, which leads this experiment, views the Front as a strategic programme with long-term aims, not only for the revolutionary experiment in Iraq itself, but for the Arab revolutionary movement.

This profound view needs constant emphasis and explanation, especially in the light of various problems in the process of revolutionary transformation which the Front has faced in the course of the experiment's practical implementation.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the revolutionary experience in Iraq is that the problems arising during the experiment are neither neglected nor covered up, but discussed openly in a democratic and objective spirit.

This distinctive approach stands out clearly in the following address by President Saddam Hussein,

delivered at a plenary meeting of the Committees of the National Progressive Front. The address deals very frankly with problems which arise in practice. The solutions suggested by President Saddam Hussein stem from faith in the necessity of the Front and its continuation for the accomplishment of the revolution's programme in all fields, including that of socialist transformations.

This meeting took place on August 21, 1976, in Baghdad. It was chaired by President Saddam Hussein and attended by members of the Front's Higher Committee, Secretariat and committees from the governorates.

This address constitutes an important account of the achievements and problems of the revolutionary experiment conducted in Iraq by the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. Due to the advanced and authentically revolutionary methods of action adopted by the leaders of this endeavour, the experience has become a genuine centre of diffusion for the Arab Revolution as a whole.

The subjective defect

Comrades,

You are aware that the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party assumed political power in 1963, and that this power collapsed nine months later. For this collapse, the blame was placed by some comrades in the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party exclusively on the Right wing within the State system which had cooperated with the reactionary Right outside this system. Many held this view, but there was another group in the Party which had criticised it since 1963, until it arrived at a correct assessment of the downfall of the 1963 Revolution.

In the document issued by the 8th Regional Congress of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, a new scientific, bold and objective assessment was developed to explain the downfall of the February 8 Revolution of 1963. This analysis attributed the main causes of the downfall to the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party itself. It proceeded from the axiom that the forces of reaction, the Right wing and

other counter-revolutionary elements would inevitably cooperate to defeat a revolution. But the actual deadly defect which precipitated the downfall was the subjective defect itself.

Let us begin with the subjective defect. Regardless of what we say concerning the external forces conspiring directly against our revolution and, more generally, against the Arab people and the peoples of the area, our main protection remains subjective immunity.

No matter how careful we are in assessing the dangers, unless we are subjectively immune we can contribute nothing serious and decisive to the full safety of the revolution, nor can we place the National Progressive Front in the appropriate place which will ward off all external and internal dangers.

Several comrades spoke at this meeting. Most of them, however, were from the Ba'th Party and the Communist Party, in addition to a few representing the other patriotic forces and elements. In spite of its wholesome and democratic aspects, this phenomenon accounts for parts of the conflict going on between the two parties outside the framework of the Front and which has also come to express itself as an intra-Front conflict. Thus, we have seen the Ba'thists criticising the Communists directly or indirectly for their acts. The Communists, on their

part, have done the same. This criticism, however, has not been accompanied by self-criticism, which, in my opinion, is the key factor. When we find a corrective to this aberration — which becomes more serious with the growing dangers surrounding us and the social advance of the Revolution toward its aims — we shall have placed ourselves within the proper framework.

Independence and interaction

I think that the error found among Ba'thists, and even more so among Communists (we should state this boldly and frankly, especially since the Communists' error in this case outweighs that of the Ba'thists; I do not say this because I am a Ba'thist but because I am firmly convinced of it), occurs when an individual comrade, because of his ideological independence, believes that he alone possesses the full and absolute truth to be applied. He then insists on this conviction, asking others to follow him. All his subsequent actions, then, will be affected by this position. Such an incorrect notion of independence, if it continues, does nothing to aid the Front in reaching its strategic horizon.

I say this with full responsibility and concern for all patriotic tendencies. The basis for interaction, comrades, is the presence of a spirit of and a desire for interaction. Desire alone, however, without a firm base, in insufficient. Hence, we should create the psychological atmosphere which makes

interaction a prerequisite. In any case, interaction is not incompatible with ideological independence.

A member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) would not have joined his party without first being convinced of the truth of its endeavour. The same can be said about Ba'thists and Communists. But now we are called upon to proceed on the basis of facts which lead us to interaction and which place new facts before us. Predominant among these is the recognition of the Revolution as our major fact which does not preclude our fundamental independence but functions rather as an umbrella under which we conduct our debates in a non-antagonistic way. Also, our relationships to the Revolution, as well as to each other, should be characterised by an interaction of ideas. Secondly, ideological independence does not preclude interaction whose purpose is to place ideology in a new context whose new aspects will be the adaptation to and interaction with the facts and developing objective conditions of the society, which will open new paths for political, ideological and social action. Such an orientation will enable us to form a Front with plenty of «crossings» which enable thoughts of give and take for the future — of better continuous interaction.

Every one of us should be both a teacher and a student in his relationship with the people and the

contingents of the patriotic and progressive forces. It is a relationship of give and take of interaction, for the purpose of arriving at the better fact. This would create an image of serious work and sincere relations for the purpose of achieving, together, our common aims.

This form of interaction which we want in our relationship within the Front will safeguard and develop our common purpose.

We all agree that theory is formulated and developed in the light of reality. Why, then, should some of you only wish to be teachers, without agreeing to interact with the others? We should each simultaneously practise the roles of student and teacher.

Without this key quality, interaction cannot exist, nor can there be an end to the occasional tensions of the part of the Ba'thists, nor can there be an end to the tensions and incorrect actions on the part of the Communists (which feed the attitude of the Ba'thists and provide them with psychological justifications). This is also true of the other patriotic contingents.

For example, even in the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, when we criticise the party organisation in Lebanon and the struggle for power in that Arab province, some Ba'thists are sensitive to criticism on the part of those who have not participated

seriously in the construction process or shown definite concern for the Revolution and its future. We have already experienced such cases.

Rights and duties, then, should be balanced. Any comrade who wishes to have the right to criticise should give proof of his concern for the process of criticism by a distinguished performance of his every-day work. Otherwise, he would not merit such a privilege and would face various obstacles from other comrades.

Side by side with an ideological independence interacting with new facts, there should be a clear belonging to the Revolution. This belonging to the Revolution, however, should not preclude ideological independence, but, so long as the belonging of some among you to the Revolution is not clearly established, Ba'thists are bound to harbour some reservation towards them.

Communist comrades, there have been many instances in the world where Communist parties have acted with great flexibility in response to the national and patriotic conditions in their respective countries. In Cuba, for example, the Communist Party cooperated with Castro's revolution to the point where Castro became the leader of the Communist Party there. There are Communist Parties in Eastern Europe which do not ever bear the name of the Communist Party. Why should ideological

independence in this country be interpreted in a manner which obstructs cooperation between yourselves and your comrades in other political tendencies, when it is interpreted differently in other revolutionary experiments throughout the world?

We sometimes hear a lot of talk from Ba'thist and other political groups in the Front. Some Ba'thist comrades consider they are losers in the Front and some discuss this subject in their Party cells. They ask their leaders to answer questions such as the following: Why do we need the Front at a time when the one positive aspect of the Communist Party regarding us is simply its support for those revolutionary measures of ours on which the entire population agrees with us, such as nationalisation of the oil industry, the giant strides along the path toward socialism, the defence of Iraq's future against the suspicious reactionary offensive spearheaded by the renegade faction in the north... etc? Could the Communist Party take any stand other than this if it were outside the Front? Is the fact that the Communist Party supports us in such cases sufficient proof of its cooperation with the Revolution, whereas it turns against us whenever an error occurs? (When we say that the Communist Party turns against us, we do not mean that it raises slogans to bring down

our regime, since we know that justifications for such slogans do not exist. We mean, rather, that in its indoctrination and every-day activities it turns against us. By this method it tries to make gains at the expense of the other patriotic groups, notably the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party.)

The same holds for our Communist comrades, who also discuss these questions in their meetings, asking: "Why do we need the Front if we do not really share power?" It also holds, albeit to a lesser extent, for our comrades in the other patriotic political groups.

We, then, ask the following question: Are not the joint efforts to build a new society with greater zeal, which reinforces Ba'thist energies with those of the KDP, the independents, the Communist Party, the Kurdish Revolutionary Party (KRP) and the Progressive Kurds, already enough of an advantage for the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party? The answer is Yes.

An objective and all-embracing outlook, an outlook of interaction and serious joint efforts to build a new society devoid of syndicalist concepts of gain, would be to the advantage of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and all other parties as well.

We also ask the following question: What has the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party lost by forming the Front? Should the individuals gained by the Com-

munist Party be regarded as a loss to the Ba'th Party according to the previously mentioned Front outlook?

With such a concept guiding the Front and its everyday activity, however, everyone wins and no one loses. The same question is addressed to the Communist Party: Comrades, you are wondering what you have won, but what have you lost? You have grown in number and popularity. Your organisation has grown stronger. Today, you are free to exchange ideas with other patriotic groups and you are acting freely. What would you have gained if you had remained outside the Front?

According to our information, some brothers, especially from the Communist Party, still feel embarrassed when asked: "Are you with the government or not? Are you with the Revolution or not?" Is it embarrassing for one to side with the great Revolution and its regime? The Revolution is cherished by every honest patriot and its major achievements are obvious to all. If there is to be any speculation about whether one is for or against the Revolution, it should be made in the context of final results, not that of details which could be criticised in a democratic and objective manner.

We should all criticise flawed details, but errors in details should not bring us into a psychological opposition to the Revolution and its government.

At the same time, however, the errors of the administrative system should be neither a means nor a justification for pursuing Party gains. The basic justification for these should be our ideology as we expound it in cooperation with the masses.

The Communists believe in a line ideologically independent from that of the Ba'th Party. The same is true of the KDP and the others. They believe in pursuing their interests independently, since any other way would be bound to lead to contradictions among the various patriotic forces. It might even lead to deviation if it came into conflict with the revolutionary process. Suppose we Ba'thists reversed the case and started attacking the Communists in our speeches and through our media, saying that they were attacking our system and principles. They would regard these as improper uses of the administrative apparatus and would try to make use of that to their own advantage. What do you imagine would happen? Is such a state of affairs acceptable? If it is, you can imagine how much you would lose if the leaders of the Ba'th Party were to inform the masses in their speeches of the negative aspects of the Communist Party. We say this not out of vanity, but rather out of the conviction that our relationship with the masses is based on positive interaction and mutual trust. That is why they would listen to our words.

So when, instead of saying that, we speak positively of the Front, of your role in it, and of the role of the other patriotic forces, this is very much to your advantage.

Therefore, since there is no loss within the Front for any group, why are there such reservations? Why have the negative vestiges of the past survived until now? We still notice these vestiges of the past, with their negative aspects, among the Communists and Ba'thists. And yet neither party regards these matters as deviations deserving strict and stern account.

The comrade to whom you have referred as refusing to deliver a speech on behalf of the Front[1] should have been taken severely to task. Similarly, any Ba'thist who violates the central directives should be called to account for his actions.

[1] President Saddam Hussein is referring to an incident dealt with at the meeting, namely, the refusal of a Communist member to deliver a speech on behalf of the Front at a public meeting.

The practice of criticism in intra-front relations

In questions of criticism, if a Ba'thist observes you to be hunting for mistakes, overlooking the objective possibilities when evaluating the measures taken by the Revolution, or turning errors into ways of winning over workers or chances for dialogue for winning over peasants and intellectuals, the Ba'thist is likely to take a hostile attitude towards you. In addition, he may well find that the bonds between himself and the Communist Party are weak, if not non-existent.

Our goal should be a sound ideological and political programme, stemming from analyses which contradict neither the Charter for National Action nor the framework and central tenets of the Revolution. Furthermore, this criticism should be placed in the right context: it should not take place in the street with the citizens but should be confined to the Front committees.

Such is the spirit of the Front as we understand it. If we diminished opportunities for criticism in the Front committees, enlarged meetings and Front leadership, we would be compromising the development of the Front with its strategic horizon for building and continuing the tasks of national construction and struggle.

How can we understand interaction and mutual influence if the meetings of the Front committees are put off?

How can there be any real interaction in the absence of frankness? Why do some Ba'thists not attend meetings for fear that the methods of presentation used by the National Front groups (or some of them) might embarrass them?

I assure you that there can be no embarrassment if the logic of the above groups is incorrect or if their method of presentation is not objective.

Whereas the Ba'thists think that Front committee meetings facilitate at their expense the preparation of little plans in the interests of other Front participants, other Front groups believe that the regularity of Front activities can only lead to Ba'thists making gains at the expense of others. When this one-sided logic is replaced by one founded on a willingness to cooperate in the control of new realities, however, no group will regard the logic of the opposite party as antagonistic or

holding hidden intentions to make gains at the expense of others.

The meetings of the Front committees should be regularised, with greater opportunities for interaction among their members and for criticism and self-criticism. If a Communist, for instance, encounters certain facts put forth by Ba'thists or other patriotic groups which he does not wish to concede in the meeting for fear of being embarrassed by his Party organisation, he should take these facts to his Party and say: "These facts have been submitted to me and I support the viewpoint of the Ba'thist comrades and other groups. So, please, do not embarrass me, comrades; this has been a wrong action." The Ba'thists should also do the same. Hence, not one of you would be embarrassed by this in a meeting.

There should be mutual influence in the Front. This would enable the Front to develop and function in the context of the strategic horizon planned for it.

This is the way we should act as leaders, because our responsibility is greater than that of other comrades who are leaders or members of Front committees in Anbar, Diyala and other governorates.

There are certain groups in the State's special departments which, because of their nature, make

excessive demands. For them to hold on to their exceptional powers, there must be exceptional circumstances.

Throughout the entire world, under both socialist and capitalist regimes, special departments may try to present the political leadership with extraordinary situations. Some of them, if dishonest, might do this deliberately, but if honest they might be psychologically and unintentionally compelled to create an abnormal situation in order to gain extraordinary powers in dealing with the political leadership.

Our role in indoctrination, control and cooperation, however, will reduce the chances for the bad or naive elements to create extraordinary situations in dealing with any question at issue.

If the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party were to stop criticising and purging the administrative system, you would then be entitled to say: "The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party is responsible for the flaws in the system." But where there is continual criticism in the press, a continual purge of the system and continued resolute measures, it is wrong to place the blame for the error of a district or sub-district director on the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party alone. Such an error is the responsibility of us all. When facts concerning acts against the Front parties on the part of any administrative official are submit-

ted, and no measures are taken against this official, then you can tell your comrades in the committees: "These are the facts. You should convey them to your supreme leadership if it is outside your responsibilities to deal with them." As for rumours, if you really wish them to die, they will not live for a single day. The fight against rumours should be conducted within ourselves because we, the Front parties, are the carriers of rumours. When this phenomenon is eliminated there will be an end to rumours.

Before beginning to fight rumours, you must first stop being their carriers yourselves, and you will see that in a short time, rumours will be considerably reduced. Afterwards you can work out a plan to eliminate the remaining rumours.

How can we put these words into practice?

There should be more interaction through regular meetings and an examination of the political decisions and administrative measures of the State together with their basic justification according to the country proverb, "incense banishes wickedness". We say, "Clarity banishes wickedness as a candle banishes darkness."

When the facts concerning a given question are clearer to a Ba'thist comrade than they are to other comrades of the Front in Sinjar[1], to take one exam-

[1] Sinjar is a town in Nineveh Province.

ple, and the Ba'thist fails to convey the information to the other comrades, they are bound to become rumour-mongers. How can they know what is true and what is not? Why doesn't the Ba'thist explain matters to them at the meetings of the Front committees in order to refute their pretexts of being ignorant of the facts? Regular weekly meetings would create the opportunity to tell your comrades what is true and what is not. You could tell them: "You should not speak vaguely outside the meetings without first asking for clarification of the subject." You, comrades, are supposed to refute rumours even though you imagine that some of them might be true. The right principle is to defend the march of the Revolution against the rumour-mongers and avoid spreading them yourselves. You can then criticise whatever you regard as erroneous in the committee meetings. But if such an effort is not made, criticism will continue outside the meetings, and so will, naturally, the spreading of rumours.

If we had applied this principle seriously and extensively, the rumours and errors of the administrative system, as well as the errors of the special organs, would have been reduced.

There are some groups which, like wolves, test their prey before attacking it. If they observe someone attacking the National Front Parties in

the presence of a Ba'thist who does not defend them against the attackers and make it clear that their criticism is incompatible with Front relations — and conversely, if they find someone attacking the Ba'thists before Front Party members — it will only encourage these groups to attack any Front Party before others. We find that such phenomena compel some administrative organs to sometimes act in opposition to the parties of the National Progressive Front.

Requirements for victory

Comrades,

You should be vigilant and cautious, without being vain. The comrades assembled here have heard me in the past speak about confidence in the future at a time when the rebellion in the mountains was strong and the reactionary forces in the area were preparing their hostile schemes from stronger positions. Still, we were confident in victory. Perhaps some of you said to yourselves then, "Comrade Saddam is too conceited." But this self-confidence was based on a deep faith in the people as well as careful scientific revolutionary calculations. On the basis of these calculations we were able to tell people whether we would win or lose.

Some of the Communist comrades must have said to themselves:

"Those *petits bourgeois* are incapable of achieving victory because the basic conditions for a revolutionary party — a party that aims at

building a socialist community — are not fully present. How can they overcome the forces of counter-revolution? They must therefore be conceited.[1]"

We could have excused such conceptions as a result of the negative relations which existed in the first two years of the Revolution, but since that time there have been no objective justifications or explanations for such attitudes.

I am not asking for recommendations from anyone. I assure you, comrades, that when questions are posed for argument between two separate trenches, we have full confidence that we are the ones to recommend others. However, we are presenting this formula now from one interacting trench in which we, together, may recommend others outside the Front.

The victory which we have achieved has not been a victory for Ba'thists alone, but for all of us, as a people and as a Front. It is in this spirit that we have triumphed.

It is in this same manner, and not with a self-righteous attitude, that we should approach the

[1] Mr. Saddam Hussein is referring to the erroneous analyses committed by some Communists when they classify the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party as a *petit bourgeois* party, neglecting its real characteristics as a revolutionary vanguard party representing all revolutionary social strata and embodying their interests.

minor incidents which sometimes occur in the Autonomous Region. In other words, we must understand the development of the historical movement and of the people's will... the will which we are resolutely leading, with the full intention of achieving our aim of building a new society. We stress again that these trivial incidents will not frighten us nor can they do anything to stop the march of the Revolution.

We must, above all, look for defects within ourselves. If we were to lose our people in Kurdistan, we would suffer a real loss. But that there should be ten, a hundred or any number of people in the high mountains standing against the Revolution is of no importance. There have been large numbers of deceived people in the high mountains before, together with traitors and conspirators, but they were unable to stop the march of the Revolution. If we were, however, to lose our people in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region, even if there were not a single armed opponent in the mountains or along the borders, we would be the losers. When we win our people over, we shall be victorious. The future will be open and clear before us, whether the insurgents number ten, a hundred or a thousand. Our victory is certain; in fact, we are already victorious.

Early on, prior to March 11, 1970, we had

stated that if the Kurdish question was dealt with through a purely military approach, we would be the losers, even if the last trench of the enemy forces in the mountains had been defeated. But if the question was approached in a correctly principled and political manner, we would win the battle even if our enemies were numerous. This prediction has been justified in the defeat of a renegade faction which involved more than a purely military solution. The Iraqi army, despite its valiant role, would not have been able to perform effectively if it had not been defending the political principles and aims drawn up by the political leadership.

Principles were responsible for the defeat of Mulla Barazani and his renegade faction. The essence of these principles is that the problems of all our people, be they in Kurdistan, in Basrah, or simply our own, should be dealt with in exactly the same spirit.

When this approach is ignored, the hundred opponents will become a thousand, the thousand will become five thousand, ten thousand: even if there were no armed rebellion at all, you yourselves would then be defeated.

We are not saying this for propaganda purpose, but because we profoundly believe in it. We made the same statement after the agreement of March 6,

1975[1], immediately following the defeat of the renegade faction in the mountains. We stated then: "Do not be vain, for then you will get carried away and lose your capacity for perceiving the right direction and objectives. Do not ignore the factors which contributed to your victory, but rather develop them further in order to be always victorious..."

The essence of these factors is concern for your people. We like the mountain in the northern part of the country not merely because it is a part of Iraq, but primarily because our people live on it. We defend the mountain in order to defend our people — this is the way we must approach the issue. Those who defend the mountain but oppress their people cannot win. While defending the mountain, it should be made clear that you are essentially defending the people who live in it.

[1] The March 6, 1975 Agreement was signed between Iraq and Iran to solve the border problems between the two countries. The Agreement was abrogated by Iraq in September 1980 after the new rulers of Iran had violated and invalidated it.

The Kurdish question

What is our view of the Kurdish national question? We will not remain silent when confronted with harmful trends. We do not share the attitude of the Communist Party member who tolerates the harmful aspects of a nationalist movement although they are in conflict with his own ideas and doctrines. If the Communist Party were the leader of the Revolution, it certainly would regard some of the concepts which it now tolerates as national concepts which are deviations and dangers to be eliminated. The experience of the socialist countries is a proof of this.

We are, therefore, led to believe that many of the ideas expressed now by the Communist Party are merely a means for making gains at the expense of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party and do not constitute a principled stand. On the other hand, when a Ba'thist makes a mistake and violates his leadership's instructions, his error also amounts to deviation.

We must understand that this country will remain within its present geographical boundaries forever. Any changes in its political image should be linked to the struggle for pan-Arab unity and objectives. We must understand that the national question should be approached with a conception of autonomy established by reasonable thinking based on faith in the people and not as a result of the abnormal conditions which we have undergone.

At a meeting of the Legislative Council of the Autonomous Region I made the following statement: "When two impossibilities are realised, the one physical, the other spiritual: when it is realised that secession is impossible physically and equally impossible spiritually through conscience, reason and faith on the part of the overwhelming majority of our Kurdish people, only then can nothing happen to the detriment of our people and territory. If their balance were upset and one prevailed at the expense of the other, our progress would be considerably compromised. Consequently, if any of us imagines that physical impossibility alone would be sufficient to ensure the unity of the destiny of the Iraqi people, he would surely be wrong. This is not the only basis of our work and policies.

"On the other hand, if we view the question impractically, unobjectively and politically, imagin-

ing that we could find a solution through a casual mental exercise, without striving to create the material and objective bases that would make secession impossible, we would be inviting the imperialists to undermine the unity of our people. It is with such a balanced outlook that we should strengthen and develop the Autonomous institutions, to enhance their effectiveness in the political, social and economic processes which aim at building a new Iraq in the spirit of the great July Revolution, under the leadership of your Party, the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party.

"There is no room for one-sided conceptions based exclusively on the use of force for foiling the imperialist designs and schemes. Nor is there room for utopian views which underestimate the importance of force in the process of development and in the protection of the sovereignty and the national and territorial unity of Iraq, always and for all time."

The antagonistic forces, including those supporting secession, should find it both spiritually and physically impossible to achieve their aims... spiritually, in the sense that our people in Kurdistan believe that their destiny is ultimately linked to the territorial integrity of Iraq and the unity of its people and place all their aims and aspirations within such a framework of thinking.

The physical parallel is created by the legal, political, economic and even military measures taken by the State. In principle there should be a balance between these two elements. Either of these two factors alone cannot prevent counter activities in the Kurdish Autonomy region. Moreover, anyone who imagines that dealing with abstract principles alone is sufficient will not promote Iraq's unity, but will only lead our people to incorrect conclusions.

Similarly, any concept proceeding exclusively from the efficacy of political, military, economic and similar measures would also be totally wrong.

Counter activity can only be ruled out by principles, by measures stemming from such principles. Such an orientation will inspire our people in the Autonomous Region to believe that the leadership in Baghdad is but a part of themselves, striving for their good and working for the national cause, in the same way that they are doing. Moreover, certain other prerequisites should be met: border control, moving inhabitants twenty kilometres from the borders to prevent infiltration, creating organs for gathering information and tracking down seditious evil trends, deploying an army in the area, building roads in the mountains, etc.

Another important point: positions should be exchanged for purposes of self-examination. If you

were to exchange positions metaphorically by the Ba'thist placing himself in the Communist's shoes, and vice versa: how would you envision the whole matter? How would you act vis-à-vis any social, political, economic or national question posed in Iraq either now or in the future? If we did this, we would certainly minimize our criticism of each other. Also, the forms and results of interaction would certainly be more positive.

Where lies our greatest victory?

In the discussions of the Higher Committee for Northern Affairs attended by some leading comrades, during which a review of the combat operations took place, we asked: "Where lies our greatest victory up to the present?" Some said that the greatest victory was the crossing of the Ali Beg Pass[1], in keeping with the well-known plan. But we disagreed. The greatest victory was that, up to the present, no soldier had fired at any individual from the opposite trench when the latter had exhausted his ammunition and raised his rifle in capitulation. The greatest victory was that not one woman had been raped during the fighting. There was no repetition of past plunders. Despite the bloodshed, the surrendering soldiers were invited to eat from

[1] Ali Beg Pass is considered to be one of the most strategic natural barriers, not only in Iraq, but in the entire world. This Pass has witnessed many fierce battles. The liberation of the Pass by the Iraqi army in a battle noted for its courage and brilliance led to the defeat of the renegade faction in 1975.

the same dish as the victors, as if nothing had happened.

This is the real victory. The unity of Iraq is still strong in the hearts of the Kurds fighting in the opposite trenches, as well as in the hearts of the Kurds and Arabs fighting in the armed forces. So long as the mentality and psychology of unity prevail, this is the greatest victory. Saying this, I know that nothing has happened which contradicts my statement, with the exception of two incidents, neither of which was the fault of the armed forces. The first took place in Zakho[1], the other in Belinkian Basin[2]. At the time we took those responsible severely to task and established strict rules as well as a detailed report endorsed by the leadership stating the guidelines of action. I tell you quite frankly that I did not imagine that those ethical and principled rules would be implemented as they were during the fight. I personally allowed for some differences between the contents of the report and their actual implementation, but, in effect, the report was fully implemented with respect to its principles and ethics.

After March 6, 1975, however, some of our forces grew vain and acted in violation of their

[1] Zakho is in Duhok Province, near the Iraqi-Turkish border.

[2] Belinkian Basin was a centre of the renegade faction which witnessed fierce fighting.

orders. We had always told them not to act like victors, since we had not won a military battle with a foreign country. The triumph belonged to all, our people, even those who had fought in the opposite trench. This is the spirit with which we should approach our people. But was this spirit actually kept up in accordance with the orders issued after March 1975? The answer is No. Some people became over-confident and were guilty of errors and excesses. In the context of this major achievement, for the sake of history we must ask ourselves: From a scientific point of view, taking into consideration all the prevailing circumstances, were the errors which took place then really natural? There was fighting and heavy casualties. The whole Revolution was in the balance by the possibility of an enemy victory. The historical potential of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party was given a major test. In the context of all these circumstances, the excesses which took place were not entirely exceptional. We do not want to justify them, of course. We have already criticised them severely, and continued to do so since 1975. We have issued directives and punished the offenders. In order to speak objectively, one must remember the past 14 years of fighting and the 14,000 dead and injured among the armed forces and patriotic detachments within one year, in addition to the

heavy casualties suffered by our people as well. Although I have no statistics on the latter, I repeat: In view of the political situation the great embarrassment and critical hazard we faced at the time, we were afraid a reaction might set in against the March Declaration and Autonomy itself. People would say to each other: "In the case of victory, we should not react passively but continue to approach this question as we did in the past. We should not assume that the manifesto was signed with Mulla, and since he abandoned it we should do the same." No, this is not just a commitment of the Mulla, it is our own commitment, the commitment of the leadership, the patriotic forces, and the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. Mulla Mustapha was only a circumstantial actor in the question of signing the March Declaration, whose essence is autonomy. He never actually believed in autonomy. The Kurdish brothers are well aware of this. Nor did he believe in the state, authority, secession, or unity, but rather in an abnormal situation through which he could consolidate his political position. The only element of leadership he ever possessed was a rifle. Hence, the only thing he wanted was a condition in which to use a rifle.

I maintain (and this is a thing I say for the first time — I have not even said it at the meetings of the Leadership) that, given these circumstances,

the errors which occurred seem natural to me. Since we in the Leadership are very sensitive to errors, the members of the Leadership, present in this hall, are aware that I am saying this for the first time. We sharply reprimand the advanced cadres, taking them to task for the smallest error. But since we wish to evaluate the recent past of this question — in order to set things straight and not to pat the wrong-doers on the shoulders — we see this as a natural phenomenon. We do not thereby allow such errors to recur: we only place them within the framework of a general objective historical evaluation.

How can we protect the Revolution?

Comrades: "Thieves can only break in when the guards are asleep." In this case, the guards are yourselves. I shall not speak here of the Right wing and the reactionary forces, or even of the events in Lebanon or the Arab area. All these are important matters, but what is more important is that you should not become lax and provide the thieves with a chance to break in. If you are immune to the dangers surrounding us, the reactionary forces will be defeated. Reaction is historically doomed. No sound and mature revolutionary experiment in the world has ever been known to be defeated.

All the defeated experiments were either non-revolutionary, or lacking the elements of revolutionary maturity.

In 1973, one of our comrades commented pessimistically on the fate of Allende, saying "Beware lest it should happen to you". We told him that while we benefit from others' experiences, we

should understand Allende's experience for what it really was. Whereas Chile did enjoy a democratic atmosphere and a number of progressive measures and reforms, it lacked revolutionary leadership and the mainstays of revolutionary organisation. Consequently it was overcome by the reaction.

Have imperialism and reaction been able to defeat Cuba, which is building socialism in the vicinity of the largest capitalist country? The answer is No.

What accounts for this is the existence of a revolutionary state, a revolutionary regime, a revolutionary party, and a revolutionary people. We believe, and I do not say this out of vanity, that there is no force on earth capable of defeating our great Revolution. We neither seek problems, nor are we afraid of them — even if they lead to war.

Our people have been made stronger by wars and ordeals whenever compelled to go through them. Our people, owner of great wealth resources, needs to be exposed continuously to danger. Otherwise it might become drugged by financial comfort and grow too fat and flabby to make any leaps forward.

This is how we view what is around us: we watch it, examine it and analyse it, and thereby make stronger our precautions. But we have never got up in the morning trembling in fear that reac-

tionary forces are marching to destroy us. Reaction might affect the pseudo-progressive regimes which act from above but whose foundations are riddled with rats. Despite all the resources of imperialism and all its fleets, however, it cannot overcome our system, whose foundation is the people. We believe in them, in their role, and in the Front. We believe in the necessary role of the patriotic forces, and continuously deepen and strengthen our principles, defences and positions. Neither the reaction nor its imperialist masters are capable of overcoming us.

We want you all to hold out your breath, to be patient in your dealings with others. I will repeat what I said fourteen months ago[1]; namely, that you should lower your statures to allow the others to stand up to their full height. This is not just a metaphor, but a specific concept with its principled and political consequences. You should heed it and seek to put it into practice.

The comrades in the Party Leadership still recall that after the signing of the March 1975 Agreement and the end of the renegade faction's rebellion, we heard some other brothers in the other parties whispering among themselves: "Perhaps the Ba'thists will say: Why the Front? And why the

[1] President Saddam Hussein is referring to a previous speech given at a plenary meeting of the National Progressive Front on June 3, 1975.

alliance?" Of course, they were wrong. They did not understand the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. Such attitudes bother us, since they reflect an ideological background which attempts to place artificial limits on the Party's practices and objectives, and thus considers the Front's work as having come to an end.

Those who understand and believe that the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party is resolute in its implementation of socialism, however, those aware of our Party's obstinate determination to combat the intrigues of imperialism and reaction in both the area and the entire world, are well assured that the Front will not come to an end, that it will have an even wider scope of development and growth.

Perhaps there were some short-sighted people, including some Ba'thists, who viewed the question from this same incorrect perspective. Their views, however, were corrected not by pompous words, but by actual measures. We should not believe that the presence of a perpetual danger is the only guarantee of the Front's survival, since stability strengthens the Front in the same way that danger does. We are not afraid of hazards, but we are certainly not looking for them. In other words, we do not seek out hazardous situations in order to test our mettle. Our deep-rooted principles and strategic outlook will guide the future course of our

mutual relations and the achievement of our aims. This should be done in the same spirit and with the same degree of zeal and solicitude on the part of everyone of us since, contrary to the thinking of some people, there is no alternative outside the scope of the Revolution and its progress, no alternative to the positive interaction which is creating for us a common experience on the way to our common objectives.

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خـنـدق واحـد أم خـنـدقـان ؟

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